



Utopian Visions:

RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE & SOVIET COMMERCIAL DESIGN
SUPREMATISM & CONSTRUCTIVISM
ARTH 2100 • KR RUDYNSKI

I. TERMS:

1. Vitebsk State Free Art Workshop
2. UNIVOS "Champions of the New Art" The school of suprematism, 1919- Kasmir Malevich
3. Vkhutemas – formed in 1919, The Russian Bauhaus
4. GINKhUT – Institute of Artistic Culture
5. PROUN – Projects for the Establishment of New Art, el lissitzky
6. Veshch' – Pro Soviet periodical, 1922
7. Novyi LEF – Left Front of the Arts, publication for the creative arts
8. NEP – New Economic Policy of the state government after the revolution, March 1922
9. ROSTA – Russian Telegraph Agency
10. 5 Year Plans – Economic programs by Joseph Stalin
11. Bolsheviks – (the Reds) working class and army led by Lenin



UNIVOS members, 1919.
Malevich at center

II. INTRODUCTION:

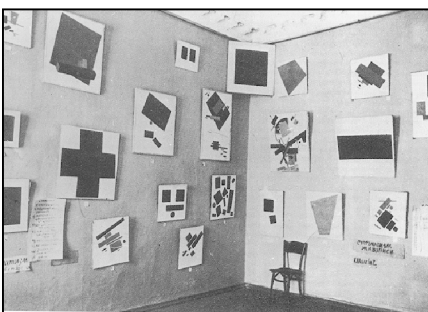
It is impossible to understand the products produced by Russian artists and designers of this time without appreciating the concerns and influences of their world around them.

1897- Karl Marx- Communist Manifesto
 1899- Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams
 1903- Wright brothers, 1st airplane flight
 1905- Theory of Relativity- Albert Einstein
 1908- The model-T Ford is introduced
 1913- New York Armory Show

1914- World War One begins
 1917- Russian Revolution begins
 1918- World War one ends,
 Czar Nicholas II executed
 (ruled since 1894)
 1922- Soviet Union is formed
 1924- Vladimir Lenin dies
 1927- Joseph Stalin rules the
 Soviet Union

At the close of W.W. I in 1918, Lenin observed the following about Russia's role in the war, thereby setting the stage for economic and technological growth that followed: The war has taught us much; not only that people suffered, but especially the fact that those who have the best technology, organization, and best machines emerge on top. It is essential to learn that without machines, without discipline, it is impossible to live in modern society. It is necessary to master the highest technology or be crushed. (Dickerman, 12)

Artist of the time were influenced by the technological changes, scientific discoveries, and new avenues of thought and religion. The Cubists, Futurists, and Suprematist were affected by - engaged in - responding to: the radio, teletype, airplane flight, color photography, x-rays, motion pictures, automobile transportation, communism, psychology, zaumism (to name only a few)...and the devastation of the world war.

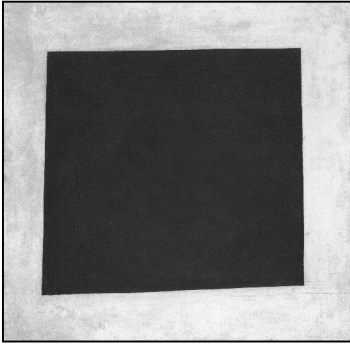


Malevich's Suprematist
work at the Futurist's 0.10
Exhibition

III. SUPREMATISM:

Shared ideals (roots) with Cubism, Orphism (or Simultanism) and Italian Futurism. Influential artists from these movements include Sonia and Robert Delaunay along with Jean Metzinger, Albert Gleizes, and Fernand Léger – in Room 41 of the 'Salon des Independants' in 1911 they gave Cubism its name. Italian Futurist Umberto Boccioni wrote 'The Technical Manifesto of Painting' in 1911 and "The Technical Manifesto of Sculpture" in 1912, and Metzinger published 'Notes of a Painter' in 1910, and Du Cubisme in 1912. These provided exposure to Russian artists along with professional friendships that included Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Kupka. Russian artists Vassily Kandinsky, Marc Chagall, and Kasmir Malevich were the foremost leaders of Russian avant-garde thinking. The new art of the UNOVIS was suprematism, the first non-

objective art – theorized by K. Malevich, and then later architecturally and graphically advanced by El Lissitzky.

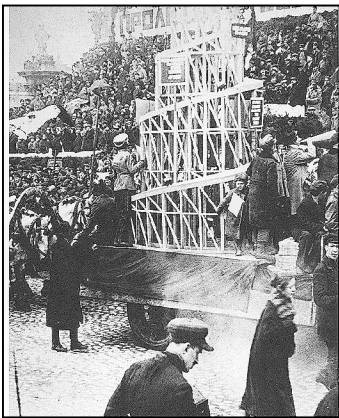


Malevich, Black Suprematist Square

A. Kazmir Malevich (1878-1935)

"The suprematist element, whether in painting or in architecture, is free of every tendency which is social or otherwise materialistic." K. Malevich, *The Non-Objective World*, 1927

1. The Woodcutter, 1912-13
2. Look, oh look! Near the Vistula..., 1914
3. Black Suprematist Square ■; 1914-15 First revealed at 'The Last Futurist Exhibition: "0.10" December, 1915
4. Red Square; 1915
5. Suprematist Composition: White on White, 1918
6. Suprematist Composition: Airplane Flying, 1914
7. Suprematism, 1921-27
8. Black Cross, early 1920's
9. Model for Cups, 1923
10. Teapot; 1923



Tatlin- Model of Monument to the Third International, 1927

Malevich organized the UNIVOS studios based on a very systematic analysis of artistic language generally, then proceeded through cubism, futurism and suprematism. He discussed the three artistic systems in *ON NEW SYSTEMS IN ART. STATICS AND SPEED*, 1919.

Three stages of studio work in which the following creative systems were studied:

•Cézanne AND CUBISM • Van Gogh AND FUTURISM •Malevich AND SUPREMATISM

IV. CONSTRUCTIVISM:

A. Vladimir Tatlin (1895-1956)

Commonly understood as the founder of Russian Constructivism. Visited Picasso in his Paris studio where he saw Picasso's sculptures of constructed materials, paper, string, cardboard, wood, metal, glass, and plastic.

1. Corner-Relief; 1914-15
2. Monument to the Third Communist International, 1920

B. Naum Gabo (1890-?)

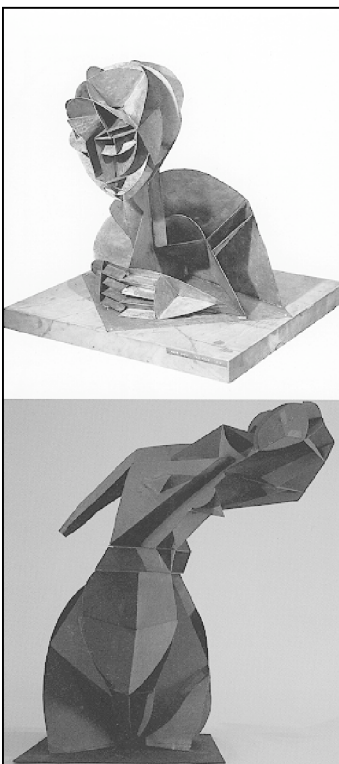
1. Head of a Woman in Corner Niche, 1920
2. Linear Construction NO. 3, 1943

C. El Lissitzky (1890-1941)

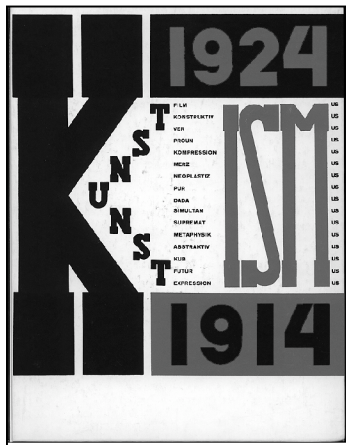
"at present we are living through an unusual period in time...a new cosmic creation has become reality in the world...a creativity from within ourselves which pervades our consciousness." el lissitzky, *suprematism in world reconstruction*, UNOVIS 1, 1920

"Let the overthrow of the old world of arts be marked out on the palms of your hands. Wear the black square as a mark of the world economy. Draw the red square in your workshops as a mark of the revolution in the arts. Clear the areas in the wide world of the whole chaos that prevails in it." (UNOVIS leaflet No. 1, 1920)

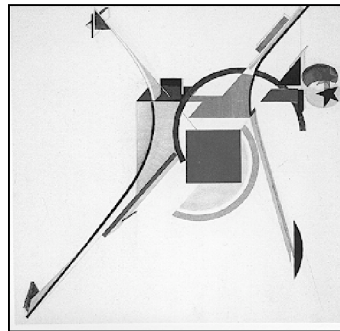
1. PROUN 23, no. 6, 1919 All PROUN paintings were images of the suprematist city in the cosmos (Four dimensions: height, width, depth, movement)
2. Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge, 1919
3. Veshech, ("Object") 1922
 - a. Cover
 - b. Title page
4. About 2 ■ 1920 printed in Germany 1922 About 2 ■ is a story about a black square and a red square who come to clear the wide world of chaos.
 - a. Cover
5. For the Voice, 1923 written by Vladimir Mayakovsky
 - a. Cover
 - b. 2-page spread



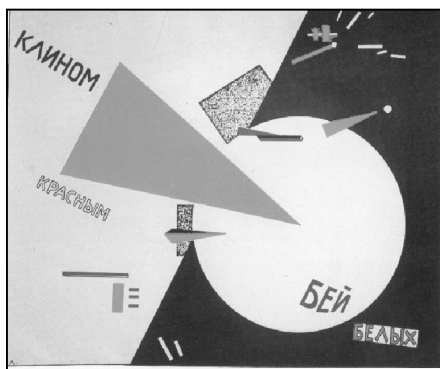
Naum Gabo, Top: Constructed head; bottom: Constructed Torso



Lissitzky, Isms of Art, 1924. Cover



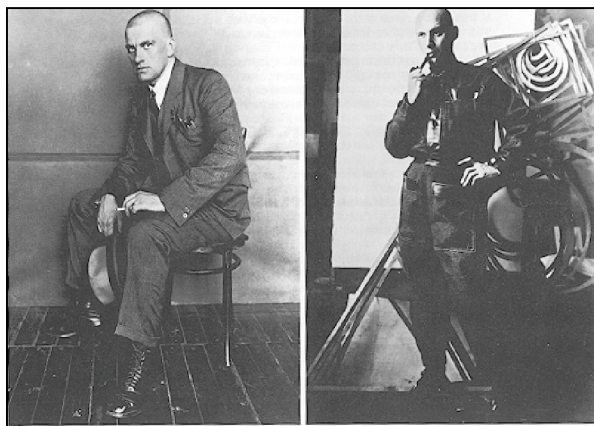
Lissitzky, The New One, Figure from A. Kruchenykh's Opera "Victory over the Sun," 1920-21



Lissitzky, Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge, 1920



Rodchenko & Mayakovsky
Poster for the Leningrad Publishing House, 1925



Vladimir Mayakovsky

Alexander Rodchenko

6. The Isms of Art, 1924 Edited with Dadaist Hans Arp
 - a. Cover
 - b. Title page
 - c. Text page format
7. Poster for Russian Exhibition in Zurich, 1929
8. Pelikan Tinte; 1924. Photogram
9. Mannequin; 1923-29. Photogram
10. Runner in the City; 1926. Photocollage
11. Self-Portrait: The Constructor, 1924

VI. SOVIET ADVERTISING FOR THE STATE:

A. Alexander Rodchenko (1891-1956) Agitational Design

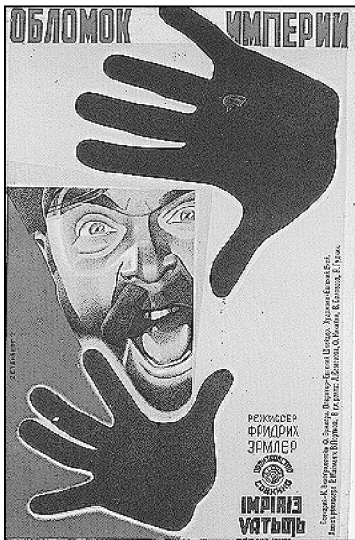
1. Rodchenko Caricature; 1933-34. By Georgii Petrusov
2. Hanging Construction, 1920.
3. Oval Hanging Construction No. 12. 1920
4. Cover for Novyi LEF no. 1, 1923
5. Poster urging citizens to become stockholders in the state airline, 1923
6. Poster advertising Leningrad Publishing House, 1925
7. Poster for Babies Dummies, 1923. "There are not and have never been any better dummies. They are ready for sucking till you reach old age. Sold Everywhere."
8. Advertisements for the largest State department store, GUM. 1923
 - a. "Seize this lifebelt! Everything for everyone. High on quality and cheap! Take it from us on the highest authority!"
 - b. "A person cannot go without a watch. The only clocks and watches to have are Mozers. Mozers can only be got at GUM."
9. Sketches for the Dobrolet, the Voluntary Share Society for Assisting the Development of Aviation. 1923
 - a. Biplane
 - b. Variant incorporating the letters 'DL 1'
 - c. Propeller
10. Film Eye; 1924. Lithograph



**"It is time for
art to flow into
the organization
of Life."**

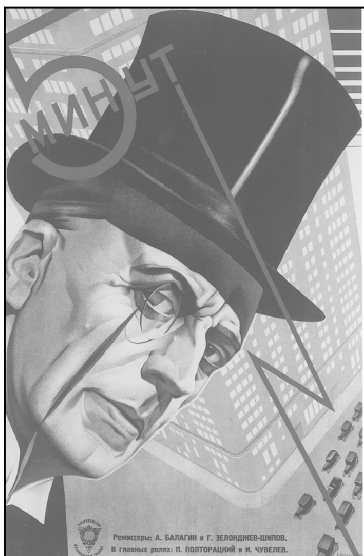
Rodchenko, 1921

Rodchenko, Film Eye, 1924



Fragment of an Empire, 1929
Lithograph

The film tells the story of a veteran who has suffered from amnesia since WW1. One day he recognizes a face on a train; his former wife. The two are reunited and the veteran begins to recover his memory. The year is 1928 and he is shocked at the changes between pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary Soviet society. As his memory returns the veteran admires many Soviet achievements. The Stenbergs use the single moment of shock which the veteran experienced to express the intensity of change from old Tsarist Empire to the new Soviet Republic.



Five Minutes, 1928. Lithograph
Title refers to the 5 minute work stoppage in honor of Lenin's death. Stenbergs utilized the ever-looming, sinister capitalist as a point of focus.



Stenberg's Studio

B. Vladimir (1899-1982) & Georgii Stenberg (1900-1933)

1. Spatial Construction KPS 42 NIV, 1921 (Vladimir)
2. Costume Design, 1926
3. Fragment of an Empire, Lithography. 1929
4. Man with a Movie Camera, Lithograph. 1929
5. Symphony of a Great City, Lithograph. 1928

Cinema - a relatively new art form in the 1920's - had obvious social applications for use as propaganda because of its basic narrative character, and its

growth and experimentation were encouraged throughout the Soviet Union.

Consequently, it is not surprising that many of the most prominent artists of the time applied their skills to the production of film advertisements and posters. The Stenberg brothers, among the most prolific of these artists, began their careers as Constructivist sculptors and worked as set designers. The Stenberg's experience and perception of the arts was more expansive and intellectual than those of others who had produced film posters previously; as a result they were able to introduce a variety of extraordinary formal innovations into the graphic arts.

Many of these new elements were borrowed by the designers directly from the films themselves, most importantly the use of the montage technique. The juxtaposition of scale this method affords is responsible for much of the dynamism and originality of composition in the posters. The sense of movement and of vertigo, and the use of repetition, so prominent in the work of the Stenberg's, are reminiscent of the cinematic arts. From the narrative aspects of the films comes the underlying anxiety depicted in many of the frightened female faces as well as an often overt sexuality atypical of advertisements of the period. (Pack. Christopher Mount, Foreward)

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